

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Purpose of the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan**

The 2000-2004 Clark County/City of Vancouver Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan (H&CD Plan) is prepared on behalf of the Clark County/City of Vancouver Consortium which represents Clark County, the incorporated cities of Battle Ground, Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Vancouver, Washougal, Woodland, and Yacolt, and the unincorporated areas of Clark County.

The 1990 National Affordable Housing Act requires that an H&CD Plan be prepared by each jurisdiction directly receiving assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Plan addresses the allocation of four federal entitlement programs: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME); Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG); and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). The H&CD Plan provides for the consolidation of local applications and reporting processes for these federal entitlement programs. It is also a strategic plan that outlines specific courses of action.

It is the purpose of the H&CD Plan to:

- 1) Provide an assessment of housing and community development needs in Clark County.
- 2) Identify resources and key players.
- 3) Develop strategies and goals to ensure affordable housing and decent living environments for persons who earn 80 percent or less of the area's median income (\$52,400 for a family of four), including homeowners and renters, the elderly and families, the homeless, and persons with special housing needs.
- 4) Develop strategies and goals to ensure support for programs and facilities that promote viable communities and address community development, infrastructure, and human service needs of urban and rural areas.
- 5) Report the annual proposed use of HUD entitlement funds.

The Clark County/City of Vancouver H&CD plan process draws from a wide range of sources and integrates a variety of planning processes. This Plan reflects involvement and input from citizens, service agencies, cities, county departments and housing providers. The intent is not to duplicate existing planning efforts, but rather to build on them. This Plan is intended to be more than just a reporting document; it builds on local assets and coordinates

a response to the needs of the community. Clark County/City of Vancouver's H&CD plan is an attempt to integrate local economic, physical, environmental, community and human development in a comprehensive manner. It also sets forth goals, objectives, and performance indicators for measuring progress and establishing a framework for assessing new knowledge and experience. The 2000-2004 Plan also contains an updated needs assessment from the 1995-2000 H&CD Plan and incorporates many of the strategies and actions outlined in previous H&CD Plans.

## **Clark County Description**

Clark County is located in the southwestern part of the State of Washington and consists of 8 cities in a total land area of 644 square miles. Clark County holds the prestigious position of being one of the faster growing areas in the nation. In the last 10 years the population has grown from 192,277 to 337,000 residents, resulting in a growth of 43 percent. Although, southwest Washington is a beautiful place to live, close to the mountains and the sea, much of the growth is a result of the County's proximity to Portland, Oregon, and the economic and tax policies of the two states.

The tremendous population growth has fueled the local economy. New industries have located in the county helping to stabilize the unemployment rate at four (4) to six (6) percent over the past decade. However, 39.6 percent of the job growth has been in the service and retail sector, with an average annual income of \$12,584 to \$15,392 respectively. With the average monthly fair market rent of \$645 for a two-bedroom apartment and the median cost of a three-bedroom home at \$146,038 an increasing number of people are finding it difficult to afford to live in this County.

## **Affordable Housing: An Overview**

The lack of affordable housing for persons earning less than 80percent (\$41,900 for a family of four) of the area's median income has become a significant problem in recent years. Rapid growth and a strong housing market, while beneficial in many ways, has resulted in housing and rental prices that are unattainable for many.

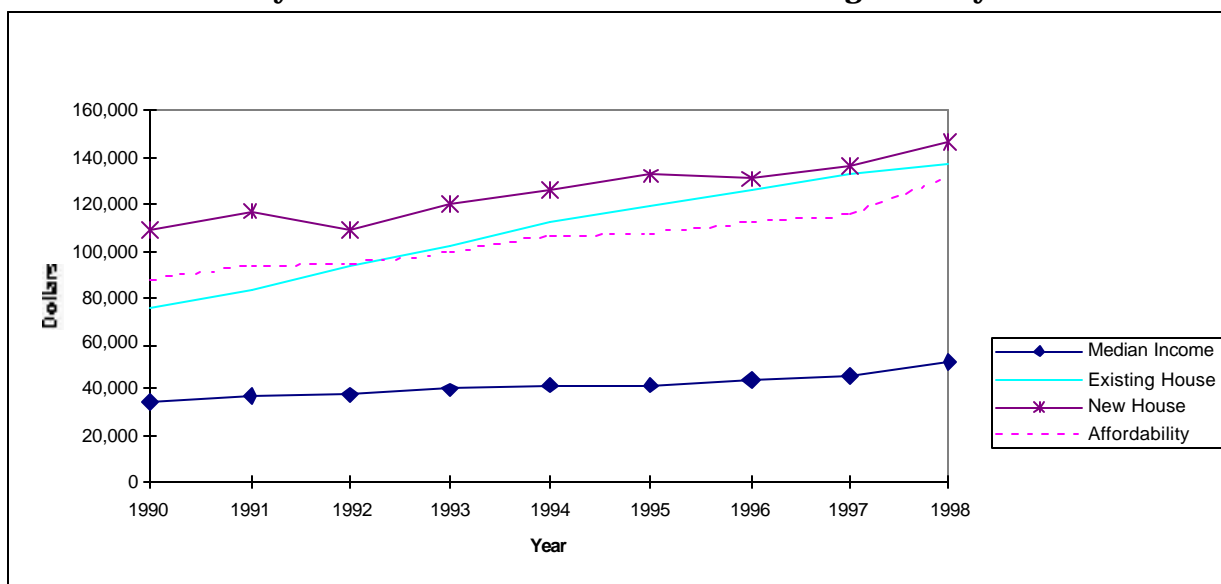
In Clark County, although many agencies provide services for people needing affordable housing, we have come together as a community not only to develop the H&CD plan but other plans as well with the goal of providing affordable housing. The key findings are included in this document.

### ***Key Findings:***

- Those in greatest need for housing assistance are the elderly, one or two member households, and large families with five or more members.

- According to the 1990 census, nearly one quarter of the County's low income households (those earning less than half of the area median income) were paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing.
- Whether a household rents or owns their home, those with incomes at or below 30 percent of median and housing costs requiring more than 50 percent of their income are considered at risk of homelessness.
- Affordable housing is listed as a need for every Special Needs population.
- An individual with a disability receives SSI payments of \$506 per month, yet the average 1-bedroom apartment rented for \$531 in 1998.
- The availability of units is also a key component. Older units are generally more affordable, but in 1999 only 2.2 percent of the older two bedroom apartments were vacant.
- Median sale prices for homes have risen from \$93,023 to \$146,038 over the last ten years. Without significant subsidy, homeownership is not affordable for households with incomes at or below 50 percent of median.

**Clark County Median Income vs. Median Price of Single Family Homes**



Notes: Affordability is 2.5 times the Median Family Income.

**2000-2004 Clark County/Vancouver  
Affordable Housing Objectives**

- Increase the supply of housing that is affordable to renter households earning 0-30 percent and 30-50 percent of the area median family income.
- Promote Homeownership for low and moderate income households earning less than 80 percent of the area median through an integrated approach that involves increasing the housing supply, increasing financial options for both housing providers and purchases, increasing individual capacity to purchase, and allowing for increased density.
- Create additional housing options and increased opportunities for self-sufficiency for low-income elderly persons, persons with disabilities and/or special needs, and public housing residents.
- Preserve, whenever cost effective, existing affordable housing units threatened with loss due to condition, location, land use regulations, expiring federal contracts, redevelopment and revitalization efforts, or other situations.

**Homelessness: An Overview**

An increasing number of families who are homeless have at least one wage earner, yet they are unable to locate or retain permanent affordable housing. Their income is not sufficient to pay the cost of housing and have enough money left for food, utilities, childcare, health care and transportation.

***Key Findings:***

- In 1999 the Council for the Homeless coordinated a point-in-time (or one night) survey of Clark County homeless and at-risk households. A total of 1,807 people were surveyed, 488 homeless (on the street or in shelters) and 1,319 at-risk of homelessness.
- The Shelter Clearinghouse linked 2,984 people to shelter in 1998, while another 3,076 were turned away.
- 59% of people in homeless shelters have been homeless at least once before
- 79% of homeless people on the street have been homeless at least once before
- 65% of at risk families and individual have been homeless more than once
- 52% of street homeless have lived in Clark County five years or more.

- 41% of homeless individuals are in families with children.
- 39 % of homeless heads of households are working full or part-time
- 38% of the homeless in Clark County are under the age of 18
- 43% of homeless individuals have a history of psychological or emotional problems
- Needs of Homeless people include:
  - Additional shelter space, especially for couples and for youth.
  - Outreach and case management.
  - Health, dental and vision services.
  - Children's supportive services.
  - Crisis/emergency bed space for persons with mental illness and/or dual diagnosed.
  - Housing, rent assistance programs and help with security deposits.
  - Job training skills and placement services.

**2000-2004 Clark County/Vancouver  
Homeless Continuum of Care Objectives**

- Provide and enhance services and facilities to serve the needs of homeless individuals and families with an emphasis on implementing a continuum of care approach. This approach includes assessment and outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing and services to encourage self-sufficiency.
- Secure stable sources of operating funding for existing services and facilities.
- Provide services to prevent persons at risk of becoming homeless.
- Improve coordination between service providers to improve service delivery and to address gaps in the continuum of care.

### Homeless Shelters Service Levels: 1999

Shelter	Primary Clients	Total Housed	Turned Away	Bednights
SafeChoice	Domestic violence victims and families	490	1,263	7302
Valley Homestead	Families	782	151	11,873
Inn at the Orchard	Families	626	83	12,424
Open House	Families	466	0	30,251
Share House	Single Males	520	1,315	13,678
Oakbridge	Youth	203	119	646
Salvation Army	All	321	63	504
Oakgrove	Youth	45	1	116
Treasure House	Families	39	86	1,219
<b>1999 TOTALS</b>		<b>3,494</b>	<b>3,083</b>	<b>78,013</b>
<b>1998 TOTALS</b>		<b>3,676</b>	<b>2,285</b>	<b>78,236</b>
<b>1997 TOTALS</b>		<b>3,368</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>72,806</b>

Source: Emergency Shelter Clearinghouse.

### Community Development Needs: An Overview

Clark County has taken a serious look at the community development needs. In 1997, Clark County joined with the City of Vancouver and local health and social services agencies in a unique opportunity to develop the Community Choices 2010 Strategic Plan. The goal of this plan is to create a preferred future for the citizens of Clark County and includes core values and strategies for creating a "vision of life" in the next 20 years. The published vision is listed below.

***"The Clark County of 2010 is a community knit together by a strong sense of belonging, neighbor to neighbor helping, family strength, and respect for individual differences. The County's strong economic base enables individuals and families to achieve a high standard of living with basic guarantees for health and well being. Embracing people of all ages, races, cultures, ability levels and lifestyles is a cornerstone of the community's strength. When individuals and families need help to achieve the quality of life the community has set as its goal, individuals, families, churches, businesses, local government, and agencies pitch in to help."***

To further address the needs of the community, Clark County received a five million-dollar, five-year grant from the *Federal Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services*. This

grant is for planning and implementing a sustainable System of Care for children with severe emotional disturbances or mental illness. The goal of this funding is to develop a service delivery system that consolidates categorical service funding streams. This project utilizes the talents and expertise of family members as well as professionals. Included in this planning effort are three objectives:

- Developmental assets: Mobilizing the community to increase youth resiliency through asset development.
- Establishment of family resource centers: which will improve access to help when needed, and mobilize neighborhoods to support youth and families.
- System redesign: integrating and realigning funders and service providers in order to change the fundamental assumptions of how help is provided to families.

Additionally, with the passage of the 1990 Washington State Growth Management Act, Clark County and the incorporated cities within its boundaries underwent an extensive planning process to help guide the area's growth. As a result, the County and the cities identified priority community development needs for infrastructure and facilities, including road improvements, sewers, parks, water systems, and recreational facilities.

***Key Findings:***

- Many of the community development priorities identified by the County and cities are a result of the rapid population growth, 43 percent over the past ten years and its impact on housing, traffic patterns, water and sewer usage, and the need for recreation, social service, schools, jails and other public facilities.
- Community-based social centers, family resource centers, health facilities, and multi-agency centers are needed to respond to the needs of this growing and diverse population.

**2000-2004 Clark County/Vancouver  
Community Development Objectives**

- Create a suitable living environment by improving the safety and livability of neighborhoods and communities throughout the county.
- Demonstrate a commitment to long term economic growth by promoting a diverse economic base and family wage jobs, and by providing opportunity for all citizens, especially unemployed and disadvantaged persons.
- Develop a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy to arrest continuing decline of older neighborhoods and their livability.
- Support public facility improvements for non-profit agencies with a priority on agencies that provide services to low and moderate income persons.
- Enhance quality of life for families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency to the

greatest extent possible by supporting health and human services which predominantly serve low- and moderate-income residents.



## **Conclusions**

Affordable housing is critical to maintaining the vitality of Clark County and City of Vancouver. Many working families and individuals cannot afford adequate housing, while others are living in emergency shelters or struggling to make the transition into permanent housing. A growing number of disabled people and people with special needs are without adequate housing options or the necessary supportive services.

Infrastructure and community based programs and facilities are needed to bridge the housing gaps and to create and sustain viable communities and a high quality of life. To help meet these needs, Clark County and City of Vancouver will allocate funds to housing and community development programs through its HUD entitlement programs. These funds will be matched and leveraged with state and local resources. Additionally, Clark County and City of Vancouver will examine ways to better coordinate existing and future resources to streamline application processes, link needs assessments with funding decisions, and position itself to respond to an emerging emphasis on local decision-making processes and a performance-based approach to the allocation of funds.